

*“If Fed Ex can track a letter around the world, AIDS patients should not have to wonder if their life-saving drugs came from the trunk of someone’s car”*

Huntington NY— Tuesday, following news of an FBI bust that uncovered a major Medicaid fraud ring using counterfeit drugs, Congressman Steve Israel (D-Huntington) renewed his call for protections against counterfeit drugs. Steve Israel has taken the lead on this issues since he heard from the family of a constituent whose son was the victim of counterfeit drugs he purchased at a major pharmacy on Long Island.

Israel said, “For nearly 25 years now the FDA has postponed the requirement that prescription drugs sales provide a pedigree. Two decades on, technological advances have provided answers to the concerns raised about that requirement, but the need for such pedigrees persists. If Fed Ex can track a letter around the world, AIDS patients should not have to wonder if their life-saving drugs came from the trunk of someone’s car.”

Rep. Israel has been leading the charge on counterfeit drugs for the past decade after one of the Congressman’s constituents, Tim Fagan, received counterfeit medication in place of the prescription he needed following a liver transplant. The injections he received only had a small amount of the medicine he actually required and wreaked havoc on Tim’s health.

Israel’s efforts are documented as part of the book *Dangerous Doses* by Katherine Eban. That book described the shady “gray market” in which prescription drugs are often sold between legitimate wholesalers and less scrupulous drug speculators before being sold back to pharmacies and finally consumers.

The Prescription Drug Marketing Act of 1988 required drug sales to have a “paper pedigree” to show the transfer history of a particular batch of drugs. The FDA put a stay on this provision and has not implemented it in response to industry concerns about implementation. Technology has advanced since that time to the point where many vendors have offered ways to track the drugs between sellers all the way to the neighborhood pharmacy.

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